


Grants Determination Sub Committee	 TOWER HAMLETS
26 November 2020	
Report of: Will Tuckley, Chief Executive	Classification: [Unrestricted or Exempt]
Local Community Fund (LCF) Performance and Annual Update Report Oct 19 – Sep 20	

Lead Member	Councillor Candida Ronald, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector
Originating Officer(s)	Robert Mee, Programme Analysis & Review Officer
Wards affected	All
Key Decision?	No
Forward Plan Notice Published	
Reason for Key Decision	Not a key decision
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	All

Executive Summary

The Mayor in Cabinet agreed on 31st July 2019 to a programme of funding for voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations from 1st October 2019. A total of 50 projects were awarded funding totalling £9.31m up to 31 March 2023 to deliver activity across five themes - Inclusion Health and Wellbeing, Digital Inclusion and Awareness, Information Advice and Guidance, Employment and Skills, Community Safety

The first year of the programme included the Covid-19 pandemic and organisations worked to support residents through this period. Projects have been RAG rated Green for performance with this rating taking account of these circumstances with all projects working towards achieving their outcome targets.

The Project Summary (Appendix 1) gives an update by project and the Annual Report (Appendix 2) gives a programme overview.

With activity adapting to new ways of delivery funding agreements may need to be amended to reflect this. Appendix 3 shows a summary of changes by Theme and Appendix 4 analyses the geographical and equalities information for the year.

Recommendations:

The Grants Determination Sub Committee are recommended to:

1. Note the performance of the Local Community Fund programme as set out in 3.2 to 3.5 and Appendix 1 - 4 for Oct 19 – Sep 20.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 Regular performance updates ensure that the LCF themes and individual projects are on track to achieve the targeted outcomes.
- 1.2 Any issues that raise concerns can be addressed and appropriate remedial actions agreed. Where necessary, this could include the reduction, withdrawal or reallocation of funds to ensure that the overall Programme is making the most effective use of resources and maximising the potential achievement of agreed aims and objectives.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Information relating to various aspects of project and monitoring activity is contained within the report to provide Grants Determination Sub Committee with an overall understanding of how projects and organisations have performed against the key elements of their Funding Agreements.
- 2.2 Grants Determination Sub Committee could request further information or alter the recommendations.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 Background

The Mayor in Cabinet agreed on 31st July 2019 to a programme of funding for voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations from 1st October 2019. A total of 50 projects were awarded funding totalling £9.31m up to 31 March 2023 to deliver activity across five themes - Inclusion Health and Wellbeing, Digital Inclusion and Awareness, Information Advice and Guidance, Employment and Skills, Community Safety

3.2 LCF Theme update

Appendix 1 Project Summary gives an update for each project with key performance indicator and progress updates up to September 2020.

Projects have been able to deliver their activity to support residents in the year with substantial progress being made up to March 2020. The impact of

Covid-19 from late March did have an impact but organisations were able to adapt services and provide support to residents through the second half of the year.

The RAG ratings of GREEN for the projects show that although there has been an impact, projects are still on track to achieve project outcomes for the lifetime of the programme.

48 Local Community Fund projects and the 1 Infrastructure & Capacity Building project delivered activities between October 2019 – September 2020.

Two LCF projects managed by REAL began in April 2020 with a condensed delivery over three years. These projects were new and there were lengthy discussions around agreeing the funding agreement which delayed project staff recruitment. In early 2020 it was agreed to rework the targets over a three-year period with delivery beginning in April 2020.

- 3.2.1** The Infrastructure & Capacity Building Fund is funding the Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Sector (THVCS) Infrastructure project lead by Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services (THCVS) in partnership with Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) and Tower Hamlets Community Transport (THCT).

This also includes support to those organisations funded through the LCF programme and other Council funding as well as other VCS organisations in the borough.

At the Cabinet meeting of 21 October 2020, it was agreed to vary the funding agreement to incorporate the continued delivery of the Covid-19 Volunteering Hub as recommended below:

Agree the proposed grant variation to the funding agreement between the Council and Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS) in relation to the Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grants Programme. This grant is delivered by a partnership led by THCVS, with the relevant element within that delivered by Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH). The proposed variation will change the volunteering focus of the programme to prioritise the delivery of a Covid-19 Volunteering Hub to VCS organisations.

A revised funding agreement is being prepared with specific key performance indicators identified for the delivery of the Covid-19 Volunteering Hub.

- 3.2.2** There are several LCF funded organisations that are in Council buildings and there are regular meetings with Asset Management to ensure that there is an appropriate property agreement in place and that the project is meeting its Premises Condition.

There are two organisations that do not have a property agreement in place – Age UK and REAL. A waiver was agreed at the 9th September GDSC that these organisations could be paid while discussions with Asset Management

continue and future decisions would be delegated to the SPP Divisional Director in consultation with the Corporate Director Place.

It has been a general principle that if delays to getting an appropriate property agreement in place were with the Council then organisations should not be penalised. This can be difficult to determine as lease documents go back and forth and legal teams for the Council and the organisation need to sign off documents.

There are three organisations where the Council is trying to put in place property agreements that have been flagged as having potential to not meet the conditions:

- Age UK – while there has been a waiver agreed by GDSC there is potential for the next payment to be withheld until the lease has been signed.
- REAL – there has been discussion of the direction the Council wants to go with this, but the latest approach is to agree a 12-month licence with REAL for the occupation of a floor at Jack Dash House. Clarification has been sought with Asset Management over what is causing the delay to have this in place.
- Working Well Trust – although this organisation has a Tenancy at Will and is paying rent on a monthly basis Asset Management are looking to move to a more appropriate property agreement.

3.3 Annual Report

Appendix 2 Annual Report presents a programme report, highlighting the work done by Theme including case studies and equalities and geographical breakdowns using the information from the individual project reports and from the support work done by grant officers through the period.

An Annual Report was a key part of the reporting process but was originally scheduled to begin with an update up to March 2020 (the first six months of the programme) and each subsequent year. This was to align the reporting with financial years. However, the impact of Covid-19 in March onwards meant in order to relieve some of the project management / reporting pressures on groups it was agreed that the Annual Report would be for the first 12 months of the programme and every 12 months after that with the final report covering the last 6 months.

A variation to the projects Funding Agreements that included the original reporting schedule was sent out 30 June 2020 and projects were due to submit their annual reports by 21st October 2020. The information included with this report includes an outcomes update, equalities and geographical data, case studies and general project progress for the year.

3.4 Next Steps – October 2020 – September 2021

With the impact of Covid-19 on the LCF programme it was important to support groups with planning, including what steps to take if there were further lockdowns, as has happened with the announcement of a lockdown from 5 November 2020. To this end grant officers worked with groups to identify what changes there are to funding agreements – any description or indicator that refers to activity that could no longer take place e.g. face to face sessions would need to be amended. This exercise found that there were no significant changes to the aims or outcomes of the projects with lifetime targets still on track to be met.

Appendix 3 – Changes to Original Funding Agreements summarises the position by theme confirming how many projects fall under the following categories:

- No changes to the funding agreement / minor changes – this could include a project name change, minor changing to wording of project description or outcomes / indicators to reflect a change of activity e.g. Move to remote delivery
- Substantial changes – this could include a change of indicator target for year 2, a change to the indicators, e.g. to better capture the steps to achieve the outcomes
- Significant Variation – this would be a change to the project aim or outcomes or a significant change to lifetime targets and would need Committee approval

There are no significant changes identified other than the change to the Infrastructure & Capacity Building project that was approved at Cabinet 21 October 2020.

In addition to identifying any changes to the funding agreement projects agreed a plan for the next twelve months identifying the adapted services and contingency planning for further restrictions and setting out estimated KPI targets for Year 2.

Projects have adapted services due to the impact of Covid-19 with remote delivery now a key component of project activity.

Examples include:

- A Volunteer Digital Buddies project was piloted to match clients who need digital support to get online, access services, learn how to use devices to trained and vetted volunteers for weekly support. The project will continue a remote and online process of interviewing, vetting of DBS and ID.
- Deliver activities through Zoom, WhatsApp, telephone and email.

- Continue to provide weekly workshops and health and fitness classes through Zoom
- Continue to provide virtual group activities to reduce social isolation, provide opportunities for the children and young people to connect and provide some routine throughout the week.
- Job Club - The project has moved their project online and will be continuing to do so for the foreseeable future. This includes engaging their clients via online mediums such as email and talking over the phone.
- The project is and will continue to engage with their clients through MS Teams and videocall. They have created an Instagram account to which they have found great success in getting participants involved.
- Digital inclusion activities to help older residents online – this will include ‘how to’ videos, to teach them how to use platforms like zoom, that can connect them to their family and friends.

3.5 Geographical and Equalities Breakdown

The beneficiary breakdown for the entire programme, as reported by the projects within their Annual Report, is set out in **Appendix 4 Equality Analysis – Oct 19 – Sep 20** which looks at the actual numbers for the first year of the programme and compares to the original Equality Analysis and Borough Profile.

The geographical breakdown shows that residents from across the borough have been supported by the programme and that the protected groups identified in the Equality Analysis have been supported broadly in line with expectations.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A strategic assessment was undertaken of the proposed Local Community Fund (LCF) programme with the Equality Analysis comprising part of the report recommending funding as agreed at the 31 July 2019 Cabinet. This included looking at the change from Mainstream Grants (MSG) to the Local Community Fund and whether the recommended projects were able to deliver against identified need.
- 4.2 The analysis identified some potentially negative impacts relating to age, race and disability and these were addressed by initiating activity outside the LCF programme including:
- New themes developed for the Small Grants Programme
 - Access and Participation

- Community Support Services for Older People
 - Commissioned Services contracts to address key areas:
 - Young People's Mental Health
 - Early Years
 - Young People's Disability Sports
 - Young Carers
- 4.3 The programme continues to deliver against the themes developed to address the identified need.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

5.2 There are no other specific statutory implications relevant to consideration of this report.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 This report updates on the performance of Local Community Fund programme and the impact of Covid-19 on delivery of objectives.

6.2 The Council's Local Community Fund programme has total funding allocation of £9.31m until March 2023, approximately £3.1m per annum. The council has also included a claim for central government funding of £1.464m to support the Covid-19 voluntary and community sector response.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 All organisations have Green status in respect of their performance of the relevant fund agreements. It is important however, especially considering an uncertain environment, that monitoring continues to ensure that the Council meets its legal Best Value Duty.

7.2 The Council needs to progress the implementation of written tenancy agreements with those organisations who occupy Council buildings as this

was part of the original Best Value Action Plan as agreed with the Secretary Of State

7.3 There are no other legal implications arising from this report.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Project Summary
- Appendix 2 Annual Report
- Appendix 3 Summary of changes to Original Funding Agreements
- Appendix 4 Equality Analysis - – October 2019 – September 2020

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A